

# **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**



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This section of the *Statewide Transportation Plan* (STP) will address public involvement in the planning and development of transportation improvements. One of the basic tenets of recent federal transportation legislation is to involve the public in the decision making process associated with transportation planning. However, before addressing public involvement, it may be beneficial to define "public." "Public" means citizens, public agencies and jurisdictions, representatives of transportation agencies, private providers of transportation, and other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects.

TEA-21 continued the emphasis on public involvement, begun and retained by the provisions of ISTEA, and added representatives of transit users and freight suppliers to the list of entities given an opportunity to comment on transportation plans and programs. TEA-21 also requires that each state develop a process for ensuring coordination with local elected officials in non-metropolitan areas in the development of the transportation plan and the TIP.

For several years Kentucky has utilized a well-established public involvement process, as part of the STP, utilizing input from the following entities: locally elected officials, both individually and through committees; the fifteen regional Area Development Districts and their committees; seven Metropolitan Planning Organizations and their committees; public meetings, and/or consultation with local officials; the Intermodal Advisory Panel, and through various other project specific public review forums as needed.

Three general areas of public involvement which are addressed through the entities listed above will be discussed: first, public input and participation during the development of the Cabinet's unscheduled highway needs process which has been used to develop the *Fiscal Years 1999-2004 Six Year Highway Plan* and this STP and the specific process described in the previous section; second, public participation during the planning and design of individual transportation projects; and third, general steps the Cabinet will be taking to enhance public involvement and coordination between agencies during the statewide transportation planning process which will result in future versions of the STP and the STIP.

### **UNSCHEDULED HIGHWAY NEEDS PROCESS**

The intent of the unscheduled highway needs process is to identify and prioritize improvement needs which have not had a previous commitment of funding beyond a planning study phase. The number of projects identified through this process has nearly tripled over the last six years due to public involvement activities.

The Cabinet initially corresponded with local elected officials of communities with a population greater than 5,000 to solicit highway needs and recommended local priorities. In addition to the input from local officials, the Cabinet now utilizes the Commonwealth's 15

regional planning agencies (Area Development Districts), the Highway District Offices (HDOs), public involvement committees at the regional level, and, in some areas, county public involvement committees have been established to identify unscheduled highway needs. Local citizens and representatives from the various modes within a region provide input through the ADD Transportation Committees. Also any individual may request a new project by submitting the project to the Highway District Office, the ADD, or to the Cabinet directly. The ADDs have also assisted the Cabinet in obtaining local priorities for transportation needs from local elected officials and local planning agencies. The Cabinet's 12 HDOs have provided highway needs and priorities which have been based on their contact with local elected officials, ADDs, local citizens and interest groups, and legislators.

The role of the ADDs has been expanded to generally involve the public throughout this process and also through the development of regional goals and objectives and the development of regional transportation concept plans to help direct this effort regionally. During each of these major activities, public input and participation has come from each ADD's public involvement process. Each ADD's public involvement process has been centered on the following:

- Establish a "transportation committee" that is representative of the transportation environment for the respective area. The membership of this committee will include a diverse group of interests that affect or are affected by the transportation system, including the transportation underserved population in order to ensure their needs are considered. Although the committee membership may greatly vary from one region to another, the ADDs are encouraged to include representatives from all modes if possible, public citizens at large, minority representatives, representatives from underserved groups such as minority or low-income neighborhood associations which have not previously been represented, planning and industrial organizations, and other interest groups representing the area.
- Conduct, as a minimum, bi-monthly transportation committee meetings to not only conduct scheduled business but also educate committee members about the statewide transportation planning process.
- Develop procedures for documenting transportation committee meetings and public meetings.
- Review periodically the ADD's public involvement process and committee membership to determine its effectiveness and make any revisions, if deemed appropriate.

## **PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

A highway improvement need advances through the statewide transportation planning process by being identified, prioritized, selected for inclusion in the STP, and advanced to the Six Year Highway Plan for implementation. During the project development phase of implementation, a highway improvement need may be the subject of a corridor planning study and/or the subject of a scoping study, or the subject of a design study. The extent and methods of public involvement used in these studies are presented in the Cabinet's "Guidelines for Public Involvement in the Highway Development Process Document" incorporated into the Division of Highway Design Guidance Manual, June, 1995. That document describes the following public involvement methods:

- advertisements for soliciting comments
- advertisements for meeting/hearing notification
- informal meetings with interested individuals or groups
- public information meetings
- public hearings with prepared transcripts

These methods allow representatives from various areas in the community to provide input to this process and to become actively involved in a public involvement process

## **STRATEGIC CORRIDOR PLANNING**

Strategic corridor planning is a logical extension of the unscheduled highway needs process and an integral part of statewide transportation planning. Most unscheduled highway needs projects are identified at the local level. The corridor planning function analyzes groups of these local highway needs which, when combined, form a strategic transportation corridor for the region, the state, or the nation. Corridor planning studies provide an analysis of needs, documentation of existing and future conditions, alternative improvement strategies, public input, estimates of cost, economic feasibility analysis, if needed, implementation strategies and coordination of compatibility with other projects (Exhibit 23).

The Cabinet has also considered various other highway systems, economic impact areas and statewide development plans in determining the corridors for inclusion in the STP. The information included in the demographics section of the STP, including economic development zones, areas of high unemployment and high civilian work force, areas with potential for economic and industrial development and the population shifts in Kentucky were all considerations involved in the development of the STP. Exhibit 24 overlays the Cabinet's current corridor studies over the Designated National Truck Network (NN). Highlighted are those major roads which are not within the five miles access of the NN, allowed under federal law. This exhibit shows how Kentucky's corridor studies are attempting to provide better access for those areas of the state which are most in need of accessible networks for industrial and economic purposes.

## **ENHANCEMENT OF PLANNING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT**

The Kentucky Transportation Cabinet is continuing to enhance public involvement for the statewide transportation planning process. The goals for enhancing public involvement include:

- Provide for early and continuing public involvement opportunities throughout the statewide transportation planning process, with an emphasis on getting public input early in the process, before projects proceed to the design phase.
- Provide for timely information about transportation issues and processes.
- Allow for reasonable access to technical and policy information used in the development of the STP through the bi-monthly statewide transportation planning process with the ADDs and the HDOs and through county public meetings.
- Allow for adequate public notice of public involvement activities and adequate time for public review and comment.
- Utilizing non-traditional methods of notification and meeting facilitation. Striving to reach “all” the public. Locating meetings and public involvement activities near the affected areas making transportation and access much easier for all citizens and scheduling meetings at times convenient for the affected citizens..
- Providing adequate public notice to all affected citizens through the use of radio announcements, neighborhood bulletins, flyers, contacting neighborhood associations and interest groups, including alternative advertising as needed to reach any affected populations, including low-income and/or minority populations.
- Allow for informal meetings in affected neighborhoods if possible.
- Enhance a process that seeks out and considers the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems such as low-income and minority households, providing a translator if non-English speaking participants are involved.
- The Cabinet is striving to improve upon this process with the possibility of utilizing surveys at the conclusion of a project to ascertain how well the process worked and also by providing all citizens with comments and the opportunity to be heard and receive a thorough response from the Cabinet.

The third and final step in this process is a process for review and comment on the STP and the *Six Year Highway Plan*. The Cabinet has established the following public involvement process to be used after a draft STP has been prepared:

- Advertise in statewide and minority newspapers and provide for a 60-day period during which each draft STP update or major revision may be reviewed for comment. The newspaper advertisements will specify a 60-day comment period. Copies of the draft STP update or major revision will be publicly displayed in the appropriate HDO, ADD Offices, and MPO Offices. Copies of the draft STP will also be available to the appropriate transit providers, airports, rail companies, riverport authorities, various statewide organizations, other state agencies, federal agencies and any individuals who ask to be included on an official mailing list maintained by the Transportation Cabinet. Letters announcing the availability of the draft STP will be sent to over 400 county judge/executives, the mayors of all communities over 5,000 population, and public involvement committee members.
- Aggregate comments from the 60-day review and comment period in order to prepare responses and finalize the STP. Copies of the final STP will be available to both the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for review and comment.
- Revise the STP to address any FHWA/FTA comments and major public comments where appropriate. Provide a written response to all parties providing written comments on the STP. The final STP will be available for public information in the same manner as the draft document was circulated for review and comment.
- The final STP will be available for public viewing through the KYTC Web Page on the Internet.
- Periodically review the effectiveness of the STP public involvement process to ensure that the process is providing full and open access to the public, including low-income and minority populations. Process revisions will be pursued on a continuing basis as deemed appropriate.

These aspects of the Transportation Cabinet's public involvement process will allow citizens, public agencies and jurisdictions, representatives of transportation agencies, private providers of transportation, representative of low-income and minority populations, and other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects, the opportunity to provide meaningful public input. This in turn will allow the Cabinet to achieve the goals for an enhanced public involvement process.